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REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96960 CABLE: REPMAR

cc to E = 9/13

August 29, 1987

Mr. Harry U. Brown
Assistant for Off-Continent Operations
United States Department of Energy
Nevada Operations Office
P. O. Box 98518
Las Vegas, Nevada 89193-8518

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you for your letter of August 21 outlining previous payments made by the United States Government to citizens of the Marshall Islands affected by the United States nuclear testing program. Following the lead you have given me, I shall request further information about these payments from Assistant Secretary Baier.

I am sending you a copy of a news release issued this week reporting the selection of Dr. Kohn to head up the Rongelap Assessment required by the Compact legislation. An alternative headline might read, "THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE, BUT WE WENT AHEAD AND DID IT!" As soon as Dr. Kohn agreed to take on as consultants the antinuke scientists who had ingratiated themselves with the Rongelap community, the people of Rongelap recognized his open-mindedness and accepted his proposal with near unanimity. The RMI consultation with the Rongelap community had entailed discussions with the leadership and public meetings over the course of the past five months.

I have referred Dr. Kohn to you as a contact point for obtaining the data that served as the basis for the 1982 report and that he and his colleagues will now review. I'm sure you will breathe a sigh of relief, as I have, that the RMI will not have to issue a request for proposals for the Rongelap Assessment and that you will not be called upon to send out the data to the many potential contractors.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "P. Oliver".

Peter N. Oliver
Special Assistant,
Compact Implementation

Rongelap 87

HARRY BROWN'S Files, NV

NEWS RELEASE

Harvard Professor Selected to Head Rongelap Assessment

MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS (August 25, 1987) -- A retired professor from the Harvard Medical School has been selected to direct an independent review of the levels of radioactivity at Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands. A board of eleven scientists will re-evaluate earlier studies by the U.S. Department of Energy regarding the safety of Rongelap. After consultation with the Rongelap community, RepMar has awarded the contract for this scientific review to Dr. Henry I. Kohn, professor emeritus of radiation biology at the Harvard Medical School.

Since 1982, Dr. Kohn has served as Chairman of the Bikini Atoll Rehabilitation Committee (BARC). BARC was established by the U.S. Congress to report independently on the feasibility and cost of rehabilitating Bikini Atoll, which had been contaminated by fallout from the testing of nuclear weapons.

Fallout from the same 1954 explosion which contaminated Bikini also fell on the inhabitants of Rongelap one hundred miles downwind from the blast.

The new scientific study will be known as the "Rongelap Radiation Assessment Project". The purpose of the project will be to conduct an independent review of the data collected at Rongelap by the Department of Energy and the conclusions based upon that data.

The contract was awarded to Dr. Kohn last week after he met with members of the exiled Rongelap community in public meetings at Majuro and Kwajalein. The three public meetings took place on Monday evening (August 17) in the Nitijela chamber, on Tuesday morning (August 18) in the schoolhouse on Mejetto Island in Kwajalein Atoll, and on Tuesday evening (August 18) in the KADA Conference Room on Ebeye Island. At the meeting on Mejetto, the community voted to accept a proposal by Dr. Kohn to undertake the project. The largest portion of the Rongelap community has resided at Mejetto, at the extreme northwest of Kwajalein Atoll, since abandoning Rongelap in 1985.

Dr. Kohn was joined in each of the meetings by Senator Jeton Anjain who represents Rongelap in the Nitijela, Councilmen Leo Jeillan and Isao Eknalang, and officials of the Chief Secretary's office. Also in attendance at the meeting on Mejetto was Arnold Campbell, Acting Representative of the United States, and Norman Smith of USAKA. In the course of the meeting, Mr. Campbell briefly described the background and purposes of the U.S. law which requires the Rongelap assessment.

RepMar is undertaking the "Rongelap Radiation Assessment Project" to fulfill a requirement of the U.S. Compact of Free Association Act of 1985 and Resolution 62 of the Nitijela. In the legislation that gave approval to the Compact, the U.S. Congress sought to take whatever steps might be necessary to restore Rongelap Atoll to habitability. As a first step, RepMar agreed to employ a scientist or group of scientists to review the data collected by the U.S. Department of Energy relating to radiation levels and other conditions on Rongelap and determine whether the data justifies the conclusions contained in a DOE report entitled "The Meaning of Radiation for Those Atolls in the Northern Part of the Marshall Islands That Were Surveyed in 1978".

The U.S. Congress has authorized the appropriation of additional funds for further radiological studies at Rongelap, if the Kohn project determines that additional research is required, and for whatever steps are needed to prepare Rongelap for re-settlement.

Dr. Kohn originally expressed interest in the Rongelap assessment in March when RepMar officials contacted him to determine if he or other members of BARC would like to participate in the project or could recommend scientists for the work. (RepMar directed similar inquiries to many other individuals concerned with the consequences of the U.S. nuclear testing program in the northern Marshall Islands.) Once Dr. Kohn

had indicated willingness to organize the Rongelap project, RepMar officials notified Senator Anjain who arranged a preliminary discussion on the study between RepMar officials and the Rongelap community. In late April, RepMar officials and representatives of the Rongelap community, headed by Senator Anjain, met with Dr. Kohn in Washington. Dr. Kohn submitted a formal proposal to RepMar in May. In early June, Chief Secretary Oscar de Brum and staffer Peter Oliver joined Senator Anjain in discussions of the Kohn proposal with the Rongelap communities on Mejetto and Ebeye. Thereafter, it was decided to invite Dr. Kohn to come to the Marshall Islands for further discussions before his contract could be concluded.

Under the terms of the contract, Dr. Kohn will direct a team of ten other scientists in reviewing the earlier work of the U.S. Department of Energy. To confirm the quality of the statistical data, the Kohn project will analyze samples of water, soil, and vegetation gathered at Rongelap to check the validity of radionuclide analyses performed by the Department of Energy. It is anticipated that the review will be completed in about six months.

The "Rongelap Radiation Assessment Project" will bring together outstanding scientists from a variety of backgrounds. The consultants will include Dr. S. J. Adelstein (Professor of Radiology, Harvard Medical School, and Director of the Joint Program in Nuclear Medicine of Children's Women's and Brigham

Hospitals in Boston), John Dunster (an expert in health physics and Director of the National Radiological Protection Board in the United Kingdom), Arthur S. Kubo (an expert in civil and nuclear engineering), M. Paretzke (Head of Radiation Risk Analysis Section of the Institute for Radiation Protection in Neuherberg, West Germany), F. L. Peterson (Professor of Hydrology and Chairman of the Department of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Hawaii), William J. Schull (Permanent Director of the Radiation Research Foundation at Hiroshima-Nagasaki, Japan), and Earl L. Stone (a member of the BARC committee and an expert in soil science). This panel includes two European scientists familiar with the consequences of the 1986 Chernobyl accident, an epidemiologist who is an authority on the cancer and genetic effects produced by radiation of the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan at the end of World War II, and scientists with experience in the Marshall Islands.

In addition to the eight scientists enlisted by Dr. Kohn for the project, the Rongelap community named three additional consultants to participate in the project: Sister Rosalie Bertell, of the International Institute of Concern for Public Health in Toronto, Canada; and two young German scientists, Ute Boikat and Bernd Franke. In his proposal to RepMar, Dr. Kohn invited the Rongelap community to nominate a consultant to the project.

Dr. Kohn was highly recommended to RepMar by a number of individuals familiar with the work of BARC. Nevertheless, his appointment was stridently opposed by antinuclear activists who sought to use the Rongelap assessment as a sounding board for their political views. A number of misstatements concerning the Kohn proposal were publicized in the Marshall Islands and elsewhere in the Pacific. Among the most blatant of the untruths was the false assertion that the U.S. Government had encouraged RepMar to award the contract to Dr. Kohn, whereas, in fact, the U.S. Government remained scrupulously neutral throughout the selection process. An official of the Environmental Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., originated false and slanderous statements about Dr. Kohn and two of his colleagues, which were repeated in several news accounts of the Rongelap assessment. Although such distortions came to the attention of RepMar officials and members of the Rongelap community, they had little impact on the selection process.